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*A Word of Comfort to the Poor, in their
present Necessity:*

A

S E R M O N,

PREACHED IN THE
PARISH-CHURCH
OF
WANSTEAD,
IN THE COUNTY OF ESSEX,

ON SUNDAY, JULY 19, 1795,

BY THE

Rev. SAMUEL GLASSE, D.D. F.R.S.

RECTOR OF THE SAID PARISH,

AND CHAPLAIN IN ORDINARY TO HIS MAJESTY.

*Humbly inscribed to the Right Honourable, the Honourable,
and the Reverend Members of the Committees
for the Relief of the Poor.*

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PHILIPPIANS, Chap. iv. Verse 11.

*I have learned, in whatsoever state I am,
therewith to be content.*

AND what lesson could the Apostle have learnt, more likely to support him under all his trials? or what more useful one could he have taught us, for our comfort in all the ordinary tribulations of life? Very considerable must his attainments have been, who could say, he knew *both how to be abased*, and he knew *how to abound*. *Every where, and in all things*, he says, *I am instructed, both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need*; and then he tells us *how*, and through *whom*, he had attained to this knowledge, and was enabled to excel in this virtue: *I can do all things*, he adds, *through Christ which strengtheneth me*. His grace, which I constantly implore, disposes and enables me in every situation of life, to conduct myself as becometh His disciple, as well when *I abound*, as when *I am in want* of all things.

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From what St. Paul here declares, we cannot but observe, that every station hath its trials, its difficulties, and its dangers. And if want of the necessaries and comforts of life is liable to excite in us murmurs against God; prosperity and abundance are not less likely on their part to tempt us to a proud *independence* upon him; to say in our hearts, “*I am rich, and have need of nothing;*” and to ask, “*Who is the LORD, that I should fear, or worship Him?*” Much danger is certainly on *either* side; and therefore it is, that we are required, in the *day of prosperity*, to be *afraid*—of being lulled into a forgetfulness of God; and, in the *day of adversity*, to *consider*—from whom, and for what purpose, afflictions are sent. To both these conditions that passage in our excellent Litany hath regard, when it teaches us to pray, that *in all time of our wealth*, as well as *in all time of our tribulation*, God would be pleased *to deliver us* from the dangers and temptations incident to both; as well from an immoderate love of accumulated wealth on one hand, as from restless dissatisfaction, and impatient murmurs, on the other.

Exhortations to contentment, however, it must be acknowledged, seem to imply a state of suffering,

ing, and are chiefly to be directed to such as are excluded from the sunshine of prosperity; over whose tabernacle a dark cloud is spread; and whom God, in the unsearchable decrees of His infinite wisdom, sees fit to try, as *gold, in the furnace of adversity*. To these it is our duty, and it is our pleasure also, to endeavour to suggest the arguments, which the Scriptures offer, for their consolation and support. It is our *duty*, inasmuch as it is one of the greatest acts of charity to *bind up the broken-hearted*, and to heal the wounds of a sorrowful spirit: and it is our *pleasure*, because it gives us an opportunity of shewing the excellence of our religion, which is always most friendly to its true professors, when they stand in greatest need of her assistance; administering to their comfort even in *the life that now is*, as well as to their everlasting happiness in *that which is to come*.

In a world so chequered with good and evil as, for wise and good purposes, is that wherein we are ordained to live, it is an argument of great wisdom and prudence to be constantly prepared for the worst that may befall us: let us therefore consider, *whence* we may derive our best comfort, under our severest trials.

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First, then—The surest ground of contentment is laid in a firm persuasion, that we and all our concerns are in the hands of the Supreme and All-wise Creator and Governor of the world.

This is one of the first principles of the Religion which we profess; and if it were possible for any man to be blind enough to all that is continually passing around him, not to see and acknowledge this truth, to such an one we do not mean to address ourselves; but such an one, indeed, we do not expect to meet with in this place; if we did, we should only wonder what brought him hither.

In God then, it is admitted, that *we live, and move, and have our Being; His never-failing Providence ordereth all things in Heaven and on Earth.* To imagine that the events which befall us are under the influence of *chance, or accident, or unavoidable necessity*, would be not less unreasonable than impious: *The LORD is in his holy temple; the LORD's throne is in Heaven: His eyes behold, his eye-lids try the children of men.* Our time is in His hand; the breath of our nostrils is at His disposal: our health, our property,

property, our comforts, our faculties, our abilities of mind and body, all are His, and at His will, to suspend, continue, or remove them, according to the dictates of His wisdom and justice and mercy : And nothing surely can so effectually reconcile us to every dispensation, however severe for the moment, as the consideration from whom that dispensation cometh. I would not, however, insinuate, that *any* arguments, even those which the best religion in the world can offer, are capable of blunting, much less can they extinguish, the sensations of humanity and natural affection ; Christianity never was designed to do it : its Divine Author shewed no such insensibility in his all-perfect character ; At the grave of his friend *Lazarus*, “ JESUS WEPT.” But though it does not *stifle*, it certainly is meant to *regulate* our affections ; and when, in the moments of sorrow and distress, our religion bids us raise our eyes, our hands, and our hearts, to Him that sitteth in the heavens over all, she bids us humbly, and patiently, and contentedly, and even thankfully, to submit to those events, which are under the direction and controul of an all-wise and all-righteous Providence.

The best means of discovering the benefit, arising from this principle of faith deeply imprinted on our minds, will be, to observe the situation of him who, in the midst of sufferings and adversity, has *no* resource of comfort from religion. Such an one you behold tossed up and down on the waves of this troublesome world; surrounded with thick clouds of sorrow and despair; laying all the blame of his disappointed expectations on some imaginary cause; either on his unlucky stars, or the envy of capricious Fortune; and finding fault with every thing, except what probably was the immediate cause of all that he endures, his own imprudence, or sinfulness, or neglect; entirely overlooking and passing by the Supreme Director of all events. What wonder if we find such an one, full of murmurs and complaints, sinking under the weight of his calamities, altogether *without hope*, because *without God in the world?*

But mark the conduct of the man whose faith is steadfast under the pressure of affliction, because his refuge is in God. “I know,” saith he, “that the LORD and Governor of the Universe
“hath the absolute disposal of me and of all my
“affairs: He hath appointed me my station in
the

“ the world ; to which he hath annexed certain
 “ duties to be performed ; and *my* duty is to
 “ take care, that patience have her perfect work
 “ in me. It is His will, that others, apparently
 “ more happy than myself, should glide down
 “ smoothly with the current of prosperity ;
 “ should be wafted through the voyage of
 “ human life with favourable gales on the un-
 “ ruffled surface of a tranquil ocean : whilst
 “ *my* lot is to contend with adverse storms and
 “ tempests ; labouring against the stream and
 “ against the winds ; yet, blessed be God, not
 “ without the hope of arriving, through his
 “ mercy, and in his own good time, at the
 “ haven where I would be ; for I am supported
 “ by the promise of Him, that hath said to
 “ those that seek His kingdom and the righteous-
 “ ness thereof in the first place, I WILL NEVER
 “ LEAVE THEE, NOR FORSAKE THEE. I know,
 “ that if I love God, and live in his fear, and
 “ discharge my duty to Him, my neighbour,
 “ and myself, as perfectly as the frailty of my
 “ nature will enable me to do, I *know*, that all
 “ things will work together for my good. Hence
 “ it is, that, although I am *troubled* on every
 “ side, yet I am not *distressed* beyond measure ;
 “ though I am *perplexed* with difficulties, yet
 “ am I not *in despair* ; though I am *persecuted*

" with afflictions, yet am I not *forsaken* of God ;
 " and though I am *cast down*, and my heart is
 " disquieted within me, yet am I not in danger
 " of being *destroyed* ; nor are the sparks of
 " Christian hope extinguished in my soul. I
 " *bear* in my *mind the sufferings* of my Redeemer
 " for my sake ; and my conformity to him, as
 " well in patience as in sufferings, is my en-
 " deavour, and I trust will ever be my study
 " and my delight."

A second ground of contentment is, the con-
 sideration, that afflictions are not necessarily the
 tokens of God's anger, but are frequently the
 proof and testimony of his love.

We have not forgotten the exhortation which
 speaketh unto us as unto children, *My son, despise*
not thou the chastening of the LORD, neither be
weary of his correction ; for whom the LORD
loveth he correcteth, even as a father the son in
whom he delighteth. Behold, saith Eliphaz, in
the Book of Job, happy is the man whom God
correcteth ; therefore despise not thou the chastening
of the Almighty ; for He maketh sore, and bindeth
up ; He woundeth, and his hands make whole :
He shall deliver thee in six troubles, yea, in seven
there shall no evil touch thee.

The well-informed Christian, who views the visitations of God in this their true light, can never be so overwhelmed with grief, as to incur the guilt of murmuring through impatience; much less will he be tempted to any *unlawful* methods of extricating himself out of the difficulties in which he feels himself involved. He will take in good part the chastisement of his heavenly Father; knowing that, if he endureth chastening with humble resignation to the hand and to the will of God, it will tend to the increase of glory and endless happiness hereafter. In the language of our Liturgy, *It will turn to his profit, and help him forward in the right way that leadeth unto everlasting life.*

Under such sentiments as these, we shall find our fellow-christian, on whom the afflicting hand of God (to answer some good purpose of his Providence) is laid, bowing submissively to those dispensations which he knows are intended for his benefit: He takes up the Apostle's argument, and applies it to his own case: *We have had fathers of our flesh, who corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of Spirits, and live? For they verily, for a few days, chastened us after their*

their own pleasure; but He, for our profit; that we might be partakers of his holiness.

Our improvement in Christian virtue, is the great end and purpose of the seemingly, and even the really, grievous strokes which are inflicted upon us. It is either for the trial of our patience, and that *our faith may be found in the day of the LORD, laudable, glorious, and honourable*; or it is designed to correct and amend in us whatsoever is offensive unto GOD. The intention therefore of Divine Providence is then only answered, when it leads us to repentance and amendment of life, and to an increase of confidence in GOD's mercy through JESUS CHRIST; not without thankfulness for that fatherly visitation, which is designed to be productive in us of greater virtue, and a brighter crown.

I am the more desirous that the lower orders of the people in particular should view the afflictions of the present world, as coming from the hand of GOD, and as intended to produce some real, lasting, and eternal benefit; because I know that no consideration can so well enable them to bear up under the difficulties which surround them at the present moment. The advanced price of the necessaries of life, in the
 opinion

opinion of, ill-judging and misguided persons, is sometimes made the ground of outrage, violence, and plunder, and even of a wanton consumption of those very articles, of the scarcity of which they complain. This is a miserable way of setting about a remedy of the evil, and would be a most ungrateful return for the long and continued exertions of such as are in affluence, for the benefit of the poor and needy. Such rash endeavours are in themselves ineffectual, whilst they are fatal to those that are thus regardless of the laws, and disturbers of the public peace. If selfishness and avarice have produced oppression, the laws are open for the punishment of the oppressor; and to *them* let him be patiently consigned: whilst they that sigh under the afflictive hand of God will be far better employed in labouring with increased industry, and spending with the utmost frugality the slender produce of their labour, and especially in adding to their strenuous exertions their prayers to God, that of His goodness He would be pleased mercifully to turn their present scarcity into plenty and cheapness.

Why then, we may ask, why are not our churches crowded with suppliant poor, imploring the merciful interposition of Divine Providence

in their behalf? Alas! I fear, too few of them are accustomed to look up, in the hour of their distress, to that Being who is our *hope and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.*

God hath destined no man to absolute penury and want, especially in a country like ours, wherein *millions* are annually collected and dispensed for the maintenance of the poor; to which they *principally*, if not they *only*, are entitled, whose hands have been employed with diligence, and whose life hath been conducted with sobriety, and who, in the use of honest and lawful means, have reposed their confidence in God.

The third and last ground of contentment, is a review of the character and situation and circumstances of Him who could have commanded all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them; and was yet contented with a low estate, and the inconveniences of an ill-accommodated life. I do not mean to infer, that the Divine Author of our religion hath hereby enjoined us to embrace, and to prefer a life of voluntary wretchedness and poverty, as the only or even the best means of salvation. It is true, that, at the first establishment of his religion in the world, and for a trial of the faith of some of its first professors,

professors, he calls upon them to *forsake all, and follow him*: but this was an injunction suited merely to the exigency of the time, and to the urgency of the then present occasion. This necessity no longer subsists; yet doth our blessed Saviour's indifference to earthly enjoyments, and his neglect (shall I not call it his contempt?) of the pomp, and splendour, and pageantry of the world, serve at least to *reconcile* such to their condition, as are debarred from the enjoyment of affluence and prosperity. As for Himself, we know the history of his birth, of his first reception among men, of his acceptance of a manger for his cradle; and we remember his own declaration, that whilst the *fowls of the air have nests*, and the *foxes* have their places of reception in the earth, *the Son of Man had not where to lay his head*. Which of *us* then hath reason to complain? Let us look on our demerits and unworthiness; and then let the poorest amongst us recount his blessings: and if, after all his enquiries, the scale of his sufferings shall apparently weigh down his comforts, let him take into his account that future state of happiness and glory which, if it be not his own fault, awaits him in a better and eternal world, through the merits of his Saviour: let him remember, that the Son of God, who was *rich in glory*,
became

became poor for our sakes, that we, through his poverty, might be rich: let him reflect, of what rank and consequence they were, whom he was pleased to make choice of, as the companions of his life, the immediate attendants on his person, the witnesses of his miracles, and the publishers of his Gospel. *Hath not God*, saith the Apostle, *chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom, which he hath promised to them that love him?* Hereby, if he hath not recommended a life of poverty, he certainly hath mitigated its sorrows; and hath shewn us, that if it is not the most pleasant, it may easily be rendered the most safe, conductor to eternal happiness. The lower ranks of life have certainly fewer obstacles and impediments in the way of their duty; they have fewer temptations to intemperance and excess, to the cup of intoxication and the lap of dalliance: they have little more to pursue than the plain course of necessary labour, of honest industry, of virtuous sobriety, of uprightness in their dealings, of constancy in their devotions, of frugality in their habits of life, and of piety, as well by example as by precept, in their families: they have little more to do, than to inculcate in the minds of their children the fear of God, a respectful submission to their superiors, an humble obedience to the laws, and a lively

lively and stedfast faith in Jesus Christ, productive of holiness and virtue in the heart and life; and then—if their lot be not cast in a goodly heritage, the trial *can* be but short, and their *hope is full of a blessed immortality*. The question before the great tribunal will be, not what portion of earthly goods any of us have possessed; but what use we have made of our possessions; whether we have been *humble*, charitable, and liberal, in an *high estate*; patient and *contented* in a *low* one; and duly careful of our everlasting concerns, in *every* state? For this awful enquiry it is certainly our duty and our interest to be constantly prepared; and, in the mean time, to sit as loose as possible to the cares, the pleasures, and gratifications of the present world: exercising ourselves with diligence in our respective stations; yet so using the world, as *not to abuse it*, by suffering it to engross our affections, and withdraw them from the pursuit of those glories which shall never have an end; to seek for strength and support, where alone it is to be found, in the ordinances of religion; to receive with thankfulness the blessings which Divine Providence poureth into our bosom, and with humble resignation to receive the corrections with which God is pleased to exercise our virtues; to look stedfastly on the example of
Him,

Him, who was *made perfect through sufferings*; and with confident expectation to wait for that hour of final recompence, when all apparent inequalities in the distribution of earthly blessings shall be finally adjusted and reconciled; when they that have *sown in tears*, shall *reap in joy*; and their *light affliction*, which, when compared with the glory about to be revealed, was but *short and momentary*, shall, through the all-sufficient merits of Him in whom they trusted, secure to them a *far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*.

Which may it please God, of his infinite mercy, to vouchsafe to us all, through Him who died to purchase it for us; even JESUS CHRIST our LORD—to whom, with the FATHER and the HOLY GHOST, be ascribed, as is most justly due, all honour and glory and praise, henceforth and for evermore. Amen.

POST-

P O S T S C R I P T.

I SUSPECT, that the Reader, on having reached the conclusion of this Discourse, if not before, will be tempted to ask, "Why was this Sermon added to the numberless productions of a similar kind, under which the Press continually groans?" To this question I will answer without reserve, That I really know not why; unless he will admit for a reason, that, of which the writer is, of all others, perhaps, the least proper judge in his own case; viz. that he thought it might serve, at the present awful moment, to smooth the brow of Poverty and Care, by holding forth the best comforts which the best of all religious systems can administer; and perhaps also might restrain the hands of such, as may be imprudently driven, either by urgent necessity, or by the malice of evil-minded persons, to seek redress, where they may be assured it never can be found. The best possible remedy of the evil, of which with grief we hear them complain, is, first, to discard from their minds every absurd idea of blame, as imputable to their legislators, who can have no possible

possible interest, so near to them, as the welfare, peace and happiness of every order of the community: and, secondly, to be more than ordinarily industrious—more than ordinarily frugal—and more than ordinarily *instant in prayer* to the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort: and that they may not want a form of words, in which they may best express the desire of their hearts, the Author has subjoined a Prayer for their use, extracted from the best collection of Prayers, any where, he believes, to be found.

“ O God, merciful Father, who, in the time of Elisha the Prophet, didst suddenly in *Samaria* turn great scarcity and dearth into plenty and cheapness! have mercy upon us; that we who are now, for our sins, punished with the like adversity, may likewise find a seasonable relief. Increase the fruits of the earth by thy heavenly benediction; and grant that we, receiving thy bountiful liberality, may use the same to thy glory, the relief of those that are needy, and our own comfort, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”

THE END.

